

It is much easier to carry on a successful evening continuation school in towns than in country districts. In the former special teachers can be more readily obtained, and those who by gifts and tastes are particularly fitted for this branch of work tend to be naturally selected for the purpose. More suitable rooms can generally be found, and the necessary appliances are more readily at hand. There are many signs that the curriculum that is most likely to prevail in the evening continuation schools of the future will be technical in its character, and adapted to the needs of those seeking to acquire special knowledge which will be of advantage to them in their daily work.

At the same time it must be remembered that the evening continuation schools essay a difficult task, and that it needs skill, care, and enthusiasm to guide and retain the interest of young scholars, many of whom are just enjoying their first taste of liberty and are specially sensitive to the counter attractions of light amusements. It is wise and necessary, therefore, to introduce an element of carefully-planned recreation, and much thought is necessary to the classification of the scholars and to the preparation of lessons. Essentially important as it is in every form of educational work, the personality of the teacher is in these schools almost the sole guarantee for sustained and general success. He needs leisure and some degree of freedom from other preoccupying work if he is to prepare interesting lessons on a variety of subjects which, if treated mechanically, fail to awaken the interest of the scholars. The classes themselves make calls upon his energy and resourcefulness which, if he is already tired with a long day's work, he cannot be expected to satisfy.

2. EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR 1896.

The work of the evening continuation schools, to the special value and difficulties of which we alluded in our last report, continues to make satisfactory progress. The effects of the new code introduced for these schools in 1893 have been as far-reaching as they have been beneficial. We now present full statistics of the third year's work under that code. The returns, which chiefly cover the year ended the 30th April, 1896, show that the numbers of separate departments inspected and of scholars have materially increased. The following table shows the facts in summary form :—

		1894.	1895.	1896.
Number of separate departments-inspected	...	3,742	3,947	4,347
Number of scholars	...	266,683	270,285	298,724
Annual grants	...	£91,540	£112,084	£129,542

While many of the evening continuation schools are playing an increasingly-important part in the work of adult education, there are signs that the great majority of the schools are becoming the means of retaining the scholars who have recently left the elementary day schools. In absolute numbers the scholars over sixteen years of age have increased during the year, but the percentage of those scholars is shown by the following table to be still in course of decline :—

	Year.	Number of Scholars on the Registers aged					
		16 and under 17.	17 and under 18.	18 and under 19.	19 and under 20.	20 and under 21.	21 and over.
Percentage ...	1894	13.55	9.66	7.03	4.99	3.67	13.89
	1895	12.93	9.12	6.28	4.37	3.27	13.22
	1896	12.34	8.41	5.78	3.92	3.03	11.98

The total number of scholars in the evening continuation schools has increased from 270,285 to 298,724, and the number of free scholars from 98,133 to 108,708. The tendency, apparent in last year's returns, for the number of free scholars to decline has thus been checked. Of those scholars who pay fees, the great majority pay from 2d. to 3d. per week. The elementary subjects—reading, writing, and arithmetic—still hold numerically the chief place in the curriculum. Geography, needlework, shorthand, and vocal music come next in popularity, with other technical subjects—book-keeping and mensuration—in the following places. Domestic economy still precedes the study of history and of “the life and duties of the citizen.” Then come, in the order named, French, German, “the science of common things,” ambulance-work, algebra, chemistry, human physiology, English, elementary physics and chemistry, elementary physiography, magnetism and electricity, agriculture, and hygiene. A comparatively small number of scholars have taken up horticulture, mechanics, Welsh, Euclid, botany, sound, light and heat, Latin, and navigation. There has been an increase in the number of scholars taking from two to five subjects, but a decline in the number of those taking five.